

A GUIDE FOR PHYSICAL DISTANCING IN THE EARLY CHILDHOOD CLASSROOM 2021

Many agree that younger children need to be in a classroom with a teacher to learn concepts and achieve the early learning standards. During this time children need to be physically distanced as much as possible, which will be a challenging task for teachers in the classroom. It is important to remember to be flexible and to check guidance regularly during these uncertain times. In this document, you will find tips to help follow guidance by the Center for Disease Control (CDC) around physical distancing in the classroom. In addition, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) also offers guidance for early childhood classrooms. Please see the resource links at the end of this document.

PROCEDURES FOR EDUCATORS AND ADMINISTRATORS:

Create EXTRA floor space by removing some furniture, spacing furniture differently to create individual and cohort spaces, and spacing out chairs in the classroom. Teachers should model and have conversations about how to leave chairs and furniture in their assigned space in the classroom. Cohorting children together in a small group and having each group stay together throughout an entire day can be used to limit the number of children and staff who come in contact with each other, especially when it is challenging to maintain physical distancing.

Create INDIVIDUAL spaces for children with furniture or painter's tape to construct their special area while still being able to see each other. Specialize the area with materials the child likes and will need. Examples of needed supplies would be several books, paper, crayons, trucks, blocks, personal sensory bin, animals, and access to a table. Plan activities that children can do individually but have conversations with each other during their individual play. Teachers will need to model how children can play individually while remaining in their space. Teachers need to encourage open conversations between children while they play in their space.



Create traffic PATTERNS and visual CUES to show children where to sit, how far three feet apart is, and the traffic flow of the room. Use stickers, dots on the floor, or signs to show children this information.

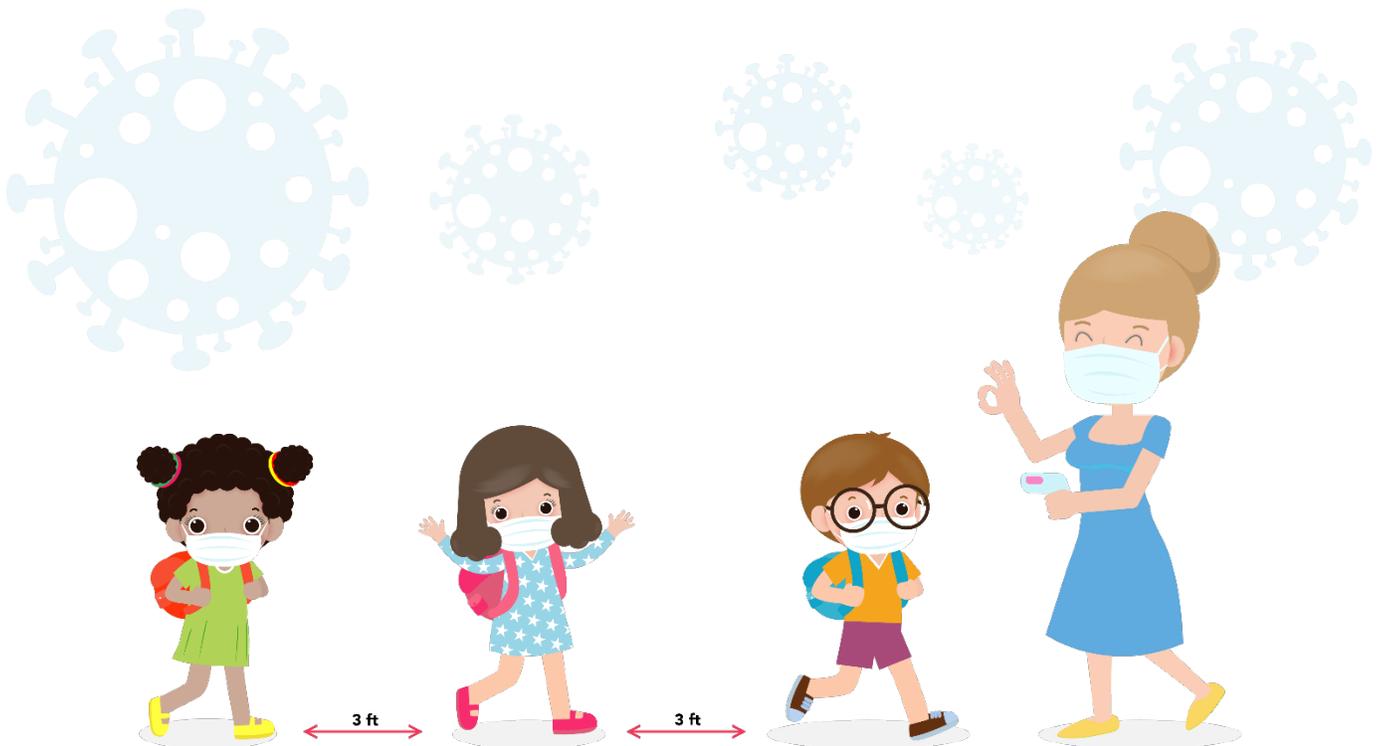
Consider creating an OUTDOOR classroom by setting up learning centers in a safe area on the playground or on school grounds. Providing a classroom outdoors will help expend children's energy, create a new and exciting classroom, and offer a new avenue of learning.

Conduct DEMONSTRATIONS with "airplane arms" to physically distance. Other demonstrations such as measuring three feet with yard sticks or measuring tape will be helpful.

LIMIT large group activities and ensure snack, mealtimes, and naptime are distanced. Serve snacks with one to four children at a time, group children in smaller groups for lunch, and place cots at least three feet away from others. As hard as it will be, limit touching children to essential care needs.

Practice SAFETY precautions by maximizing physical distancing when interacting with parents, have children immediately wash their hands, and find their assigned space that is a safe distance from their classmates. Have children wash their hands throughout the day. Children can get a stamp on their hand while working on a project and after they complete the activity, they wash their hands so well that they wash the stamp mark off so they can get another one. Check the child's temperature before entering the room and continue this practice throughout the day.

Remember the EARLY LEARNING GUIDELINES when planning re-entry to school. It will be tough trying to find a balance to make the magic work in an early learning classroom, but the guidelines should be followed.



RESOURCES FOR **EDUCATORS** AND **ADMINISTRATORS**:

[American Academy of Pediatrics: Guidance for School Re-Entry](#)

[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\): Guidance for Early Care and Education/Child Care Programs](#)

[COVID-19 pandemic: Helping young children and parents transition back to school](#)

[How to Keep Daycare Safe Amid Coronavirus: YMCA Shares Tips on Social Distancing Using Cones and Hula Hoops](#)

[Summer Camp Uses Hula Hoops to Enforce Social Distancing](#)

[Ways to Social Distance at Preschool During COVID-19](#)

[Early Learning Guidelines](#)